ECLIPSE COMICS
No.1 $1.50
$2 CANADA
AXEL PRESS
also featuring:
MYSTA MYSTRALIS, LASER ERASER!
BOLLAND

NAME THIS COLUMN

THE BIG CHANGE: So much has happened at Eclipse Central since the last "Surf City" page was written that I don't know how I'm gonna fit all the news in this one. The changes have been radical, exciting, and – most of all – rapid! Taking it from the top. . .

ECLIPSE PUBLISHER JAN MULLANEY "RETIRES": Yes, after seven years of juggling two careers, Jan Mullaney has decided that being a full-time musician and a full-time comic book publisher takes more hours than there are in a day. With his music commitments increasing (he's written the score to an off-Broadway musical which is playing right now; it's called "Cradle Song" and is directed by Stephen Schwartz of "Godspell" and "Pippin" fame), Jan has retired from Eclipse, although he will remain as a consultant to the company he co-founded with his brother Dean. We'll miss Jan, but those who see him in concerts, hear his keyboard playing on records, listen to records he produces, or go to see his musical are going to be the winners in this deal. Jan is quite a guy, and if comics are the poorer for his departure, music will be all the richer.

DEAN DOES THE INEVITABLE: Dean Mullaney, brother to the above-mentioned Jan (you knew that already, didn't you?) has now moved up from being Eclipse's Editor-in-Chief to being Publisher. Says Dino, "It was about time to get some new business cards printed, anyway." Seriously (he almost never is) Dean promises that the business end of Eclipse will be streamlined and made easier to deal with now that all the work is being transferred to our California office.

AND I FOLLOW SUIT: The shift in job descriptions and responsibilities has affected me too. No longer just a free-lance editor for the company, I am proud and happy to say that I have been promoted to the title of Editor-in-Chief. Never, ever in my wildest dreams did I think my interest in funny books would lead to this! I remember the days when my highest ambition was to sweep the floors of a certain office at 655 Madison Avenue in New York City. I wrote a letter to the Editor-in-Chief of this rather small comic book company (actually, I think he was the only editor they had, as well as being their chief writer), and I offered to quit college so I could keep their floors clean or make coffee or just do any little thing for them. I also mentioned that I would not need to be paid, that I would work for free, just to be near the center of comic book creation.

Instead of leaping at my offer, the editor in question, a man noted for his ready smile and his excessive use of the word "nutty," passed the whole thing along to his secretary. This wonderful woman took the time to write me a personal reply, in which she explained that the company's offices were so small that there would be no room for me to sweep. "We're so crowded we're hanging from the walls," she wrote.

She also urged me, with evident sincerity, to remain in college and get a degree. "Then, if you're still interested in comics, you'll be much better qualified and might be able to get a job in New York," was her advice.

Well, I didn't stay in college, I never moved to New York, and I even lost my interest in comics for a couple of years along the way. But here I am today, the Editor-in-Chief of a funny book factory that's about the size now that the one I admired so much was back then. Isn't it strange, how life lets you think it's meandering along with no direction, and then suddenly it hits you with a great big realization that you have arrived at a destination you aimed yourself toward all of twenty years ago?

Thank you, Flo Steinberg, wherever you are. I didn't take a single piece of the advice you gave me in 1964, but here I am now – and I can truly say that whenever a comic book office needs its floors swept, I am at last fully qualified to do the job.

WEST COAST MIGRATION: The news is out, all over town. Pacific Comics has suspended publication of their colour comics line. That leaves a lot of fantastic projects without a publisher, and quite a number of these items are making a trek up the coast from Pacific's San Diego headquarters to our own Guerneville office. Negotiations are still in progress, and there are publishers other than Eclipse involved in bidding for some of the ex-Pacific titles, but at this point we are happy to announce that SIX books which were to be published by Pacific are going to press right now and will be on sale this month (October 1984) from Eclipse. They are:

GROO SPECIAL No. 1: This is a giant 48 page Baxter paper Sergio Aragones (and Mark Evanier) Groo extravaganza, and it also contains, as an added, last minute bonus, a reprint of the very first **GROO** story ever printed, a silent four-pager that ran in Eclipse's own **Destroyer Duck** no. 1. How did we manage to give you four extra pages of story for no increase in price? Simple – we just threw out four of the ad pages Pacific had scheduled for that space!

ROCKETEER SPECIAL EDITION No. 1: This is it! – the full-length all-Rocketeer issue by Dave Stevens (with pin-up pages by such greats as Al Williamson, Doug Wildey, William Stout, Michael Kaluta, Russ Heath, Murphy Anderson, Gray Morrow and more!). Originally the cover title was **Pacific Presents** no. 5, but only the name has been changed – it is still going to be one of the best looking comics published in this decade – and **THE ROCKETEER** by any name is worth adding to your collection.

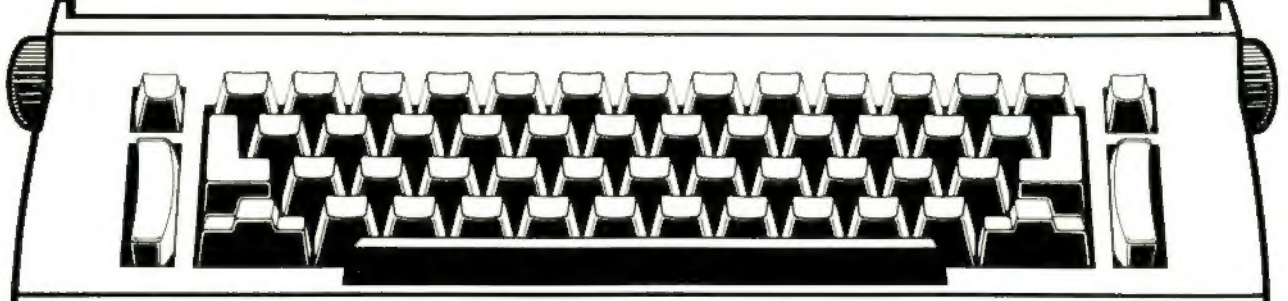
SIEGEL AND SHUSTER, DATELINE 1930s: A look at the comics produced by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster before they created **Superman**! This is a collection of historically important material from the two guys who started it all.

BERNI WRIGHTSON, MASTER OF THE MACABRE No. 5: The final issue in this fine series of full-colour work by the master of contemporary horror comics. You'll thrill, you'll chill, and you'll sleep uneasy at night once Berni takes you on a tour of the terrors only he can bring to throbbing, grisly life.

STRANGE DAYS No. 1: The world has been waiting for a truly New Wave comic – and here it is, direct from the English combo of Peter Milligan, Brendan McCarthy and Brett Ewins.

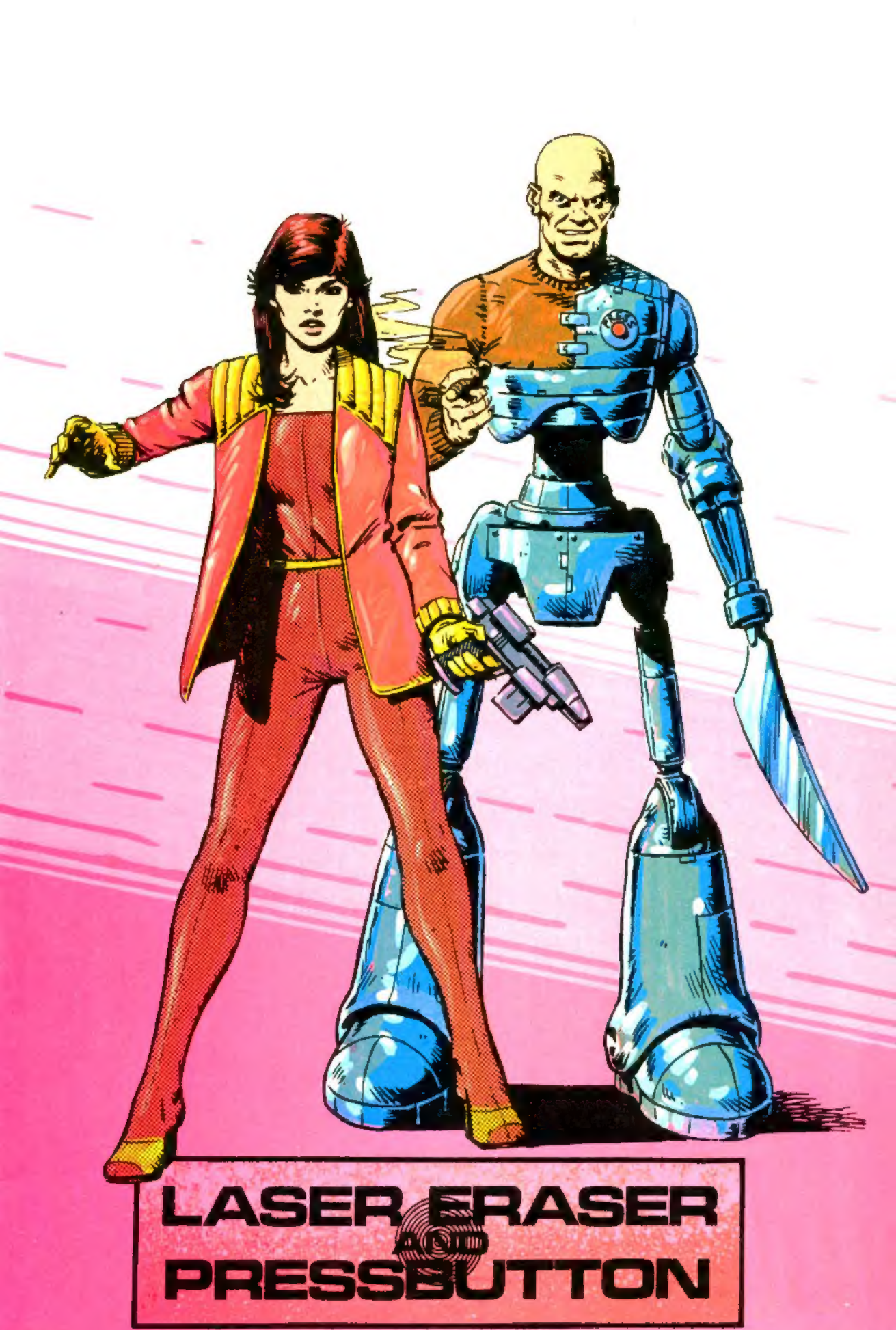
PRESSBUTTON No. 1: Another of England's finest series, by Pedro Henry, Steve Dillon and Brian Bolland. Laser Eraser and Axel Pressbutton are unique, and hot – but wait until you see Zirk!. . . Science fiction at its best, and gorgeous art as well. It's a new bi-monthly from Eclipse, and you'll love it!

TIME FOR A CONTEST: Since the old "Jan and Dean" joke no longer applies, it doesn't make much sense to call this editorial page "Notes from Surf City" anymore. Send in your suggestion for a new name – the winner will not only see it in print every month but will also get a free six issue subscription to the Eclipse comic of his or her choice. Enter today!

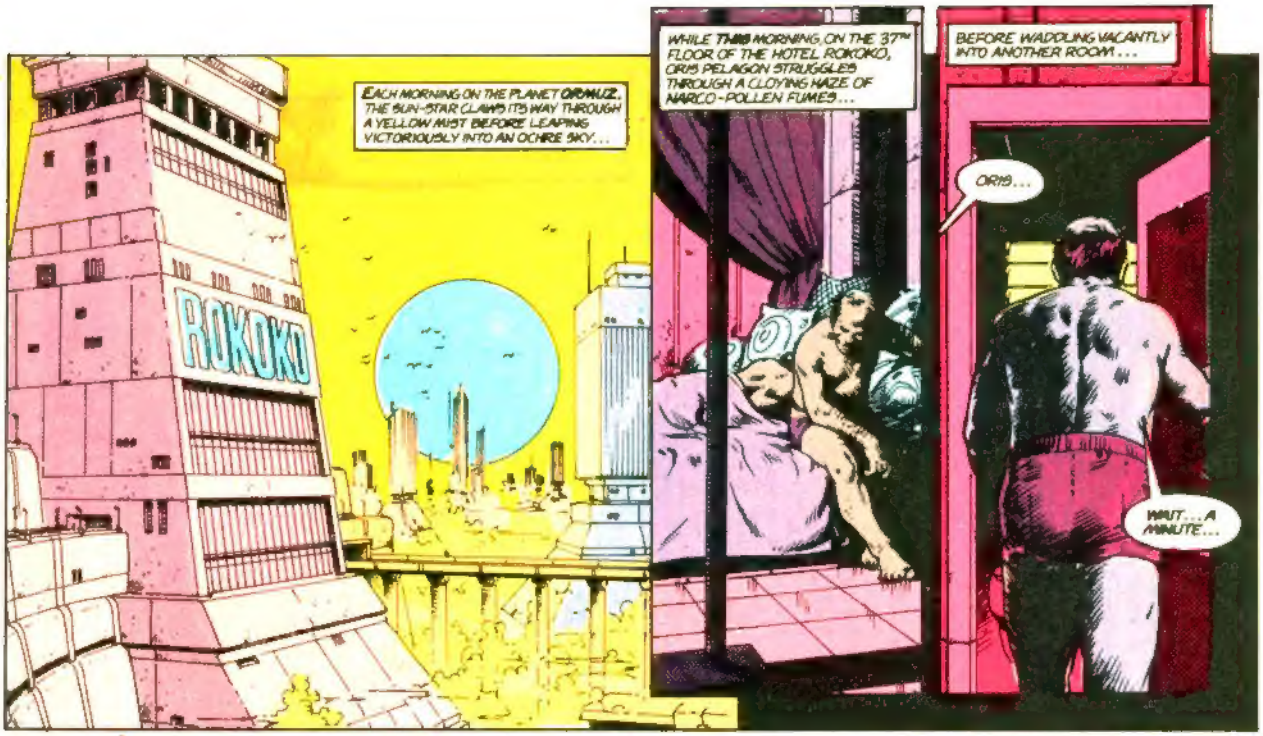


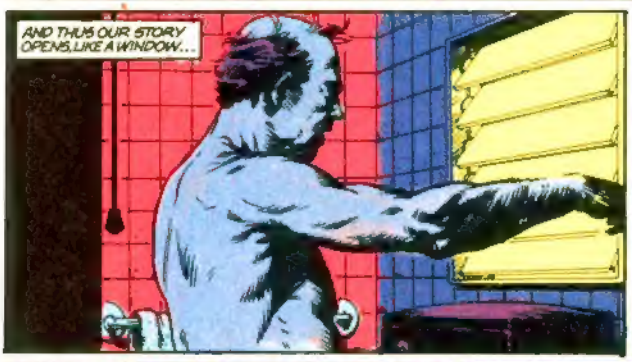
by CATHERINE YRONWODE

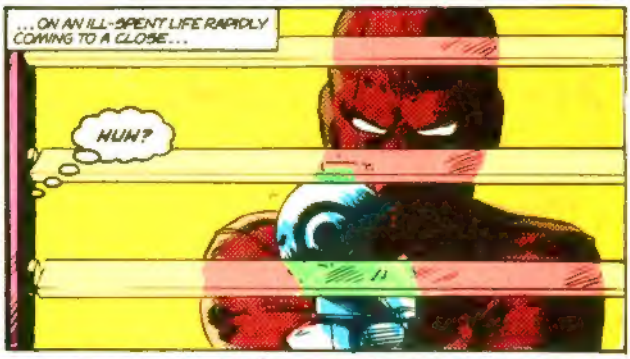
AXEL PRESSBUTTON Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1984. Published bi-monthly by Eclipse Comics, P. O. Box 199, Guerneville, California USA 95446. Axel Pressbutton TM and © 1984 Pedro Henry, Steve Dillon and Quality Communications. "Axel Pressbutton" story © 1984 Pedro Henry and Steve Dillon. "Zirk" © 1984 Pedro Henry and Brian Bolland. All other material © 1984 Eclipse Comics. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person, or real institution is intended and any such similarity which may exist is just a coincidence, y'know. Special thanks to Dez Skinn, Editor, Mike Friedrich of Star*Reach Productions, and to Steve and Bill Schanes of Pacific Comics for their help and cooperation. Printed in Canada.



Editor: **DEZ SKINN** Story: **PEDRO HENRY** Art: **STEVE DILLON** Coloring: **LES DORSCHIED**


EACH MORNING ON THE PLANET ORMUZ, THE SUN-STAR CLAWS ITS WAY THROUGH A YELLOW MIST BEFORE LEAPING VICTORIOUSLY INTO AN OCHRE SKY...
ROKOKO
WHILE THIS MORNING, ON THE 37TH FLOOR OF THE HOTEL ROKOKO, ORIS PELAGON STRUGGLES THROUGH A CLOYING HAZE OF NARCO-POLLEN FUMES...
BEFORE WADDLING VACANTLY INTO ANOTHER ROOM...
ORIS...
WAIT...A MINUTE...


AND THUS OUR STORY OPENS, LIKE A WINDOW...


...ON AN ILL-SPENT LIFE RAPIDLY COMING TO A CLOSE...
HUH?

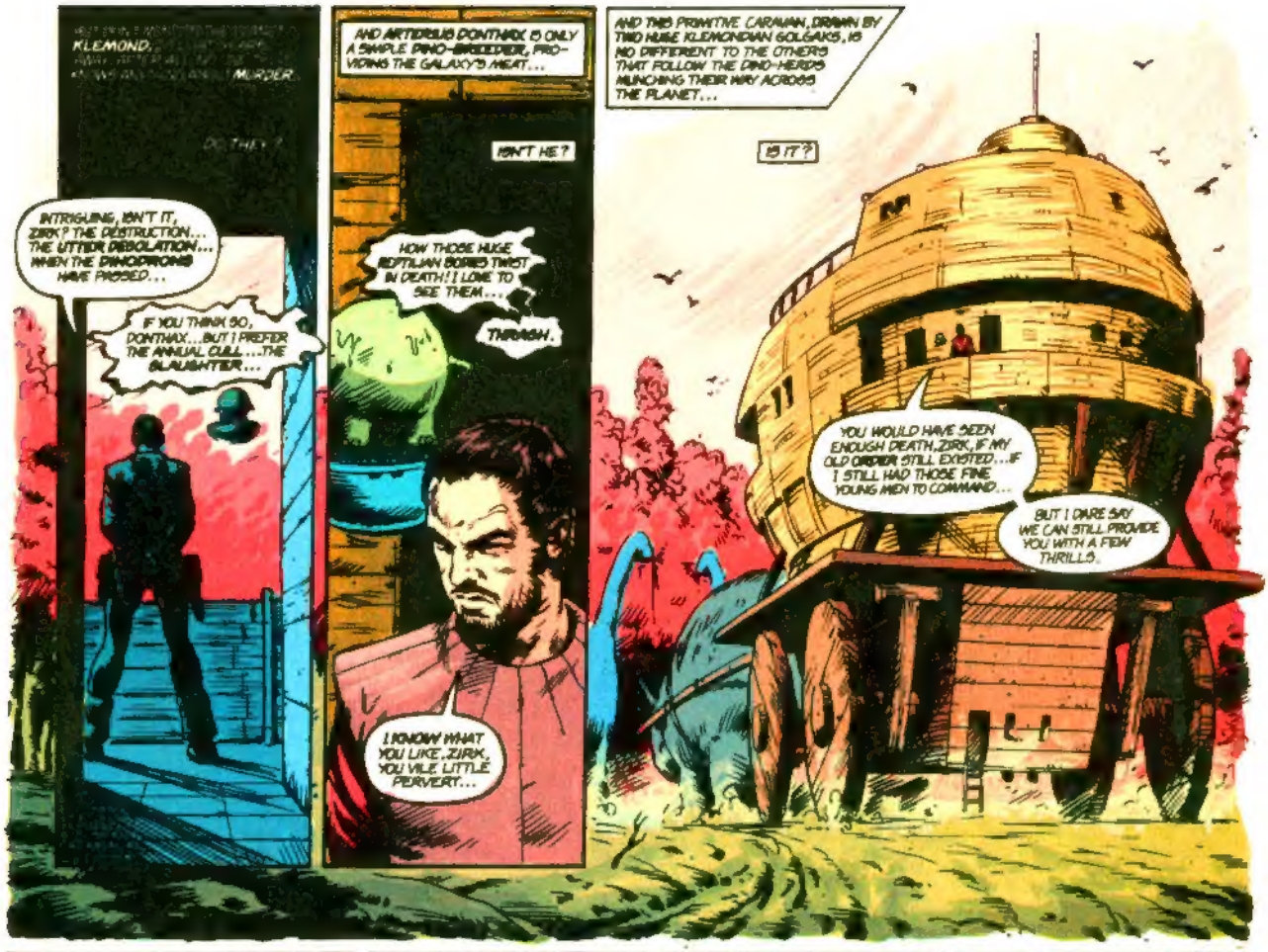
SQUIT!!

ORIS?

ORIS?

OH, DEAR, WHAT AM I GOING TO TELL YOUR WIFE, ORIS?

TELL HER "HIS LAST THOUGHT WAS OF YOU"... IT SOUNDS BETTER THAT WAY.
TELL HER IT WAS QUICK...
CLEAN HIT?
HEAD SHOT.
TELL HER... JUST TELL HER IT WAS A PROFESSIONAL JOB...
BURNED OUT HALF HIS BRAIN...
THE FAT TOAD WOULDN'T HAVE FELT A THING.
16.


KLEMOND.
MURDER.
DO THEY?
INTRIGUING, ISN'T IT, ZIRK? THE DESTRUCTION... THE UTTER DESOLATION... WHEN THE DINOSAURIANS HAVE PASSED...
IF YOU THINK SO, DONTHAX... BUT I PREFER THE ANNUAL CULL... THE SLAUGHTER...
AND ARTEMUS DONTHAX IS ONLY A SIMPLE DINO-BREEDER, PROVIDING THE GALAXY'S MEAT...
ISN'T HE?
HOW THOSE HUGE REPTILIAN BODIES TWIST IN DEATH! I LOVE TO SEE THEM...
THRASH.
I KNOW WHAT YOU LIKE, ZIRK, YOU VILE LITTLE PERVERT...
AND THIS PRIMITIVE CARAVAN, DRAWN BY TWO HUGE KLEMONDIAN GOLGARS, IS NO DIFFERENT TO THE OTHERS THAT FOLLOW THE DINO-HERDS MUNCHING THEIR WAY ACROSS THE PLANET...
IS IT?
YOU WOULD HAVE SEEN ENOUGH DEATH, ZIRK, IF MY OLD ORDER STILL EXISTED... IF I STILL HAD THOSE FINE YOUNG MEN TO COMMAND...
BUT I DARE SAY WE CAN STILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A FEW THRILLS.

CAPTAIN BAROWIET ON THE VISIPHONE FOR YOU, WORSHIPFUL DONTHAX...

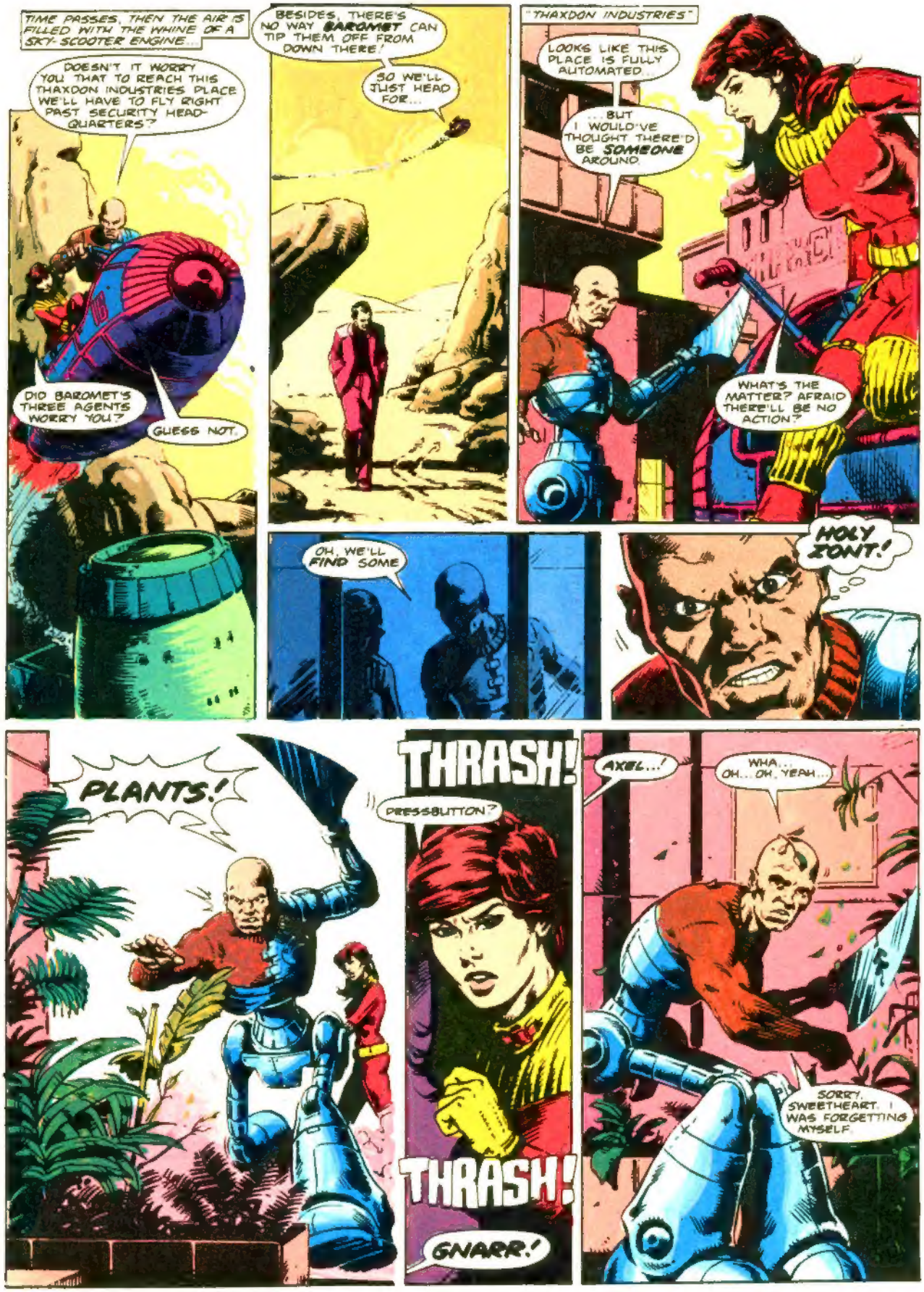
DONTHAX... I WOULD LIKE TO SEE ONE OF YOUR HUMAN FEMALES...
...THRASH!
NOT ONE OF MINE YOU DISGUSTING LITTLE BEAST...
PERHAPS WE'LL GIVE YOU MYSTA MYSTRALIS!

PELAGON HAS BEEN ERASED BY MYSTRALIS AS YOU PLANNED, WORSHIPFUL DONTHAX.
VERY GOOD.

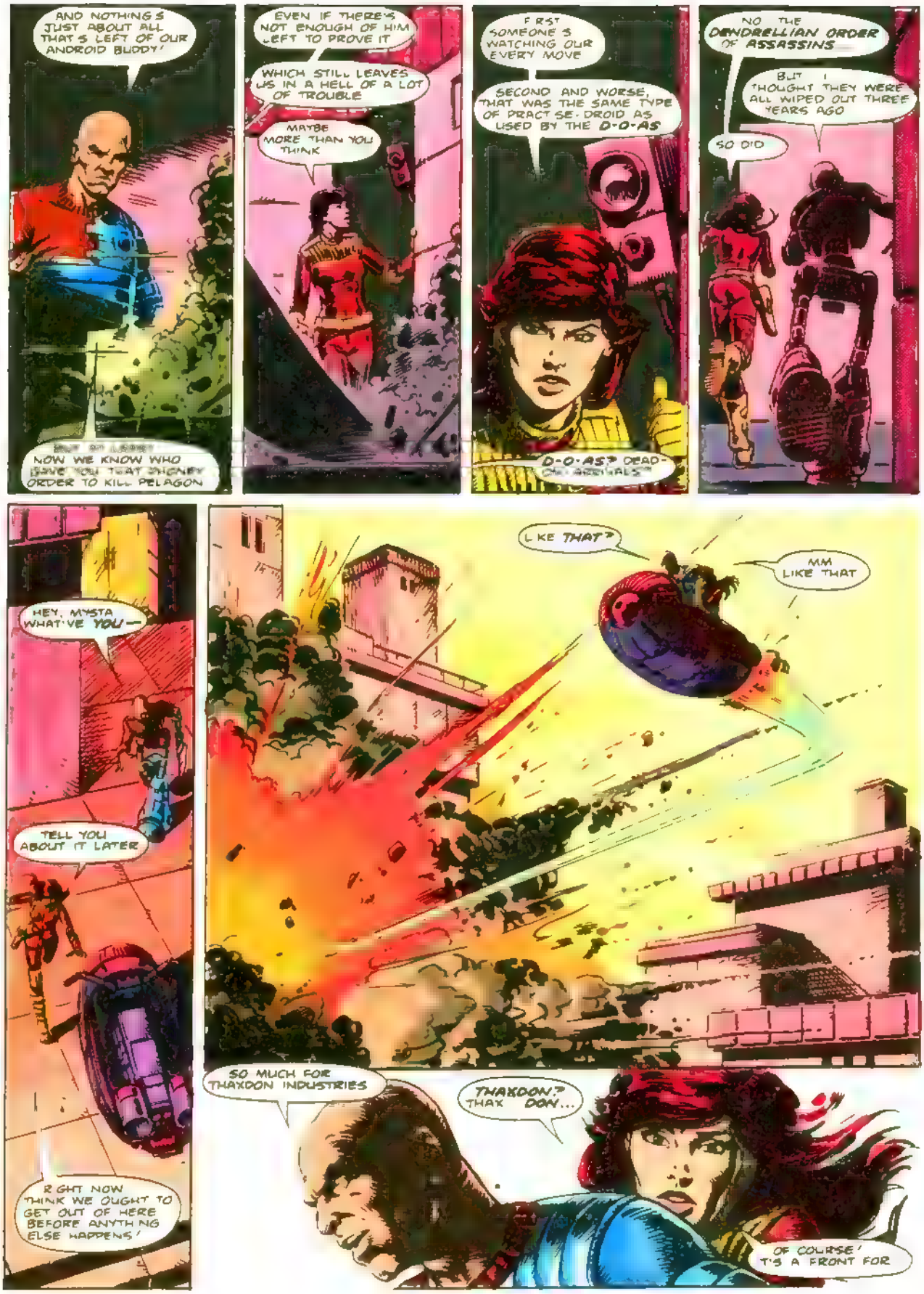
CAPTAIN BAROMET!
COME IN AND MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, CAPTAIN! I WON'T KEEP YOU LONG.
THIS WON'T WAIT, MYSTA.
DOOR VID
I'M SURE IT'LL WAIT UNTIL I PUT ON A MORE...
THAT LONG... BUT NO LONGER. AND SO...
YOU MADE AN ERASURE THIS MORNING, MYSTA? HOTEL ROKOKO, 37TH FLOOR?
YOU KNOW I DID... SPENT TWO HOURS HOVERING ON A PAIR OF AIR-SHOES WAITING FOR HIM TO COME TO THE WINDOW.
VENTVI DIVICI, THE DREAM-RACKETEER, RIGHT?
WRONG. YOU GOT ORYS PELAGON, MINISTER OF WEATHER AND A DULY ELECTED PRIEST OF SKATIL.
AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ARREST YOU, MYSTA. NOW YOU'RE UNARMED AND I'M SURE YOUR ACCOMPLICE WON'T...
MY ACCOMPLICE? AH, YES, I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'VE MET...
"...AXEL PRESSBUTTON."
THIS IS CAPTAIN MANETHO BAROMET OF ORMUZIAN SECURITY, MY EMPLOYER UNTIL ABOUT FIVE SECONDS AGO.
CAPTAIN BAROMET WANTS TO ARREST US, PRESSBUTTON. ISN'T THAT INTERESTING...
NO ONE'S EVER ARRESTED PRESSBUTTON BEFORE, CAPTAIN...
AT LEAST, NO ONE'S ACTUALLY SUCCEEDED IN ARRESTING HIM.
SEC

BUT AXEL'S REALLY QUITE A LIKEABLE MAN...
OR RATHER, PART OF A LIKEABLE MAN...
YAAAAGH!!
RIPP!
BUT HE DOES TEND TO RATHER LOSE CONTROL OF HIMSELF...
HOLY SKATL! H-HE'S INHUMAN!
AAIIEEE!!
SLASH!
OH NO, CAPTAIN. HE'S HUMAN... I'M NOT.
AAAUUUGH!!
SLI-TNK!
OW!
"OW?"
LAST GIMP HAD A STEEL PIN HOLDING HIS LEG TOGETHER.
ANY MORE FOR ANY MORE?
NO... I THINK CAPTAIN BAROMET HAS JUST LEAVING... DON'T WORRY, CAPTAIN. WE'LL CLEAN UP THE... MESS.
BUT IF YOU WANT TO BE ILL, PERHAPS YOU'LL WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE OUTSIDE...
FOR A MOMENT, ONLY THE EERIE WHIRR OF CLEANING ROBOTS IS TO BE HEARD IN MYSTA MYSTRALIS'S TURRET HOME. AND THEN...
WE BOTH KNOW THAT WAS BAROMET WHO CALLED LAST NIGHT, MYSTA... I SAW HIM ON THE SCREEN MYSELF...
AND I HEARD HIM TARGET VENIVI DIVICI AT THAT ADDRESS FOR YOU... A LEGAL AUTHORISED HIT...
IT DOESN'T END HERE, MYSTA. NOT WHEN THAT... THAT MANIAC'S SLAUGHTERED THREE OF MY MEN.
RIGHT... ALSO I CHECKED THE DIRECTIONAL VECTOR ON THAT CALL... SO EITHER BAROMET'S LYING. WHICH IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE...
OR WE GOT A FAKE CALL FROM SOME PLACE ON THE SAME VECTOR AS SECURITY H.Q...

...LIKE THERE.
SECURITY
ACCORDING TO THIS, THAT PLACE IS OWNED BY THAXDON INDUSTRIES...
HMM... THERE GOES YOUR EX-FRIEND BAROMET, MYSTA...
WHAT NOW, SWEETHEART? HE'LL BE HEADING STRAIGHT BACK TO SECURITY H.Q...
I DON'T THINK HE WILL, PRESSBUTTON HONEY... NOT IF YOU'D CARE TO STEP ASIDE...
THIS SHOULD SLOW HIM DOWN SOME... IT'S A THIRTY MILE WALK BACK TO SECURITY H.Q.
AZZZT!!
SO I'LL HAVE TIME TO FINISH MY SHOWER WHILE YOU WARM UP THE SKY-SCOOTER.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT NAME... THAXDON INDUSTRIES...
THAT MAKES ME WANT TO PAY THEM A VISIT...
AND KILL A FEW OF THEIR EMPLOYEES UNTIL WE FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON.


TIME PASSES, THEN THE AIR IS FILLED WITH THE WHINE OF A SKY-SCOOTER ENGINE...
DOESN'T IT WORRY YOU THAT TO REACH THIS THAXDON INDUSTRIES PLACE WE'LL HAVE TO FLY RIGHT PAST SECURITY HEADQUARTERS?
DID BAROMET'S THREE AGENTS WORRY YOU?
GUESS NOT.
BESIDES, THERE'S NO WAY BAROMET CAN TIP THEM OFF FROM DOWN THERE!
SO WE'LL JUST HEAD FOR...
"THAXDON INDUSTRIES"
LOOKS LIKE THIS PLACE IS FULLY AUTOMATED.
...BUT I WOULD'VE THOUGHT THERE'D BE SOMEONE AROUND.
WHAT'S THE MATTER? AFRAID THERE'LL BE NO ACTION?
OH, WE'LL FIND SOME
HOLY ZONT!
PLANTS!
THRASH!
PRESSBUTTON?
THRASH!
GNARR!
AXEL...!
WHA... OH... OH, YEAH...
SORRY, SWEETHEART. I WAS FORGETTING MYSELF.

SOME OTHER TIME
RIGHT NOW WANT TO CHECK OUT THIS —
HOW IS — HE'S ALREADY HERE?
MAYBE HE'LL TELL US HOW
UH MYSTA? TELL ME IF WE PASSED BAROMET ON THE WAY
DOUBT IT HE DOESN'T LOOK AT ALL TALKATIVE
MAYBE IF CHOPPED OFF A FEW FINGERS IT'D LOOSEN HIS TONGUE
DON'T THINK IT WOULD PRESSBUTTON
HOW ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE?
WOULDN'T FEEL THAT EITHER HE WOULDN'T FEEL ANYTHING
LOOK AT HIS EYES
SO THEY'RE ARTIFICIAL SO WH —
AXEL! GET DOWN! HE'S
I'VE GOT NOTHING AGAINST GUYS WITH MECHANICAL BODIES
EXCEPT WHEN THEY EXPLODE!
AXEL? YOU OKAY?
FEW DENTS MAYBE SCRATCHED THE POLISH A LITTLE IT'S NOTHING

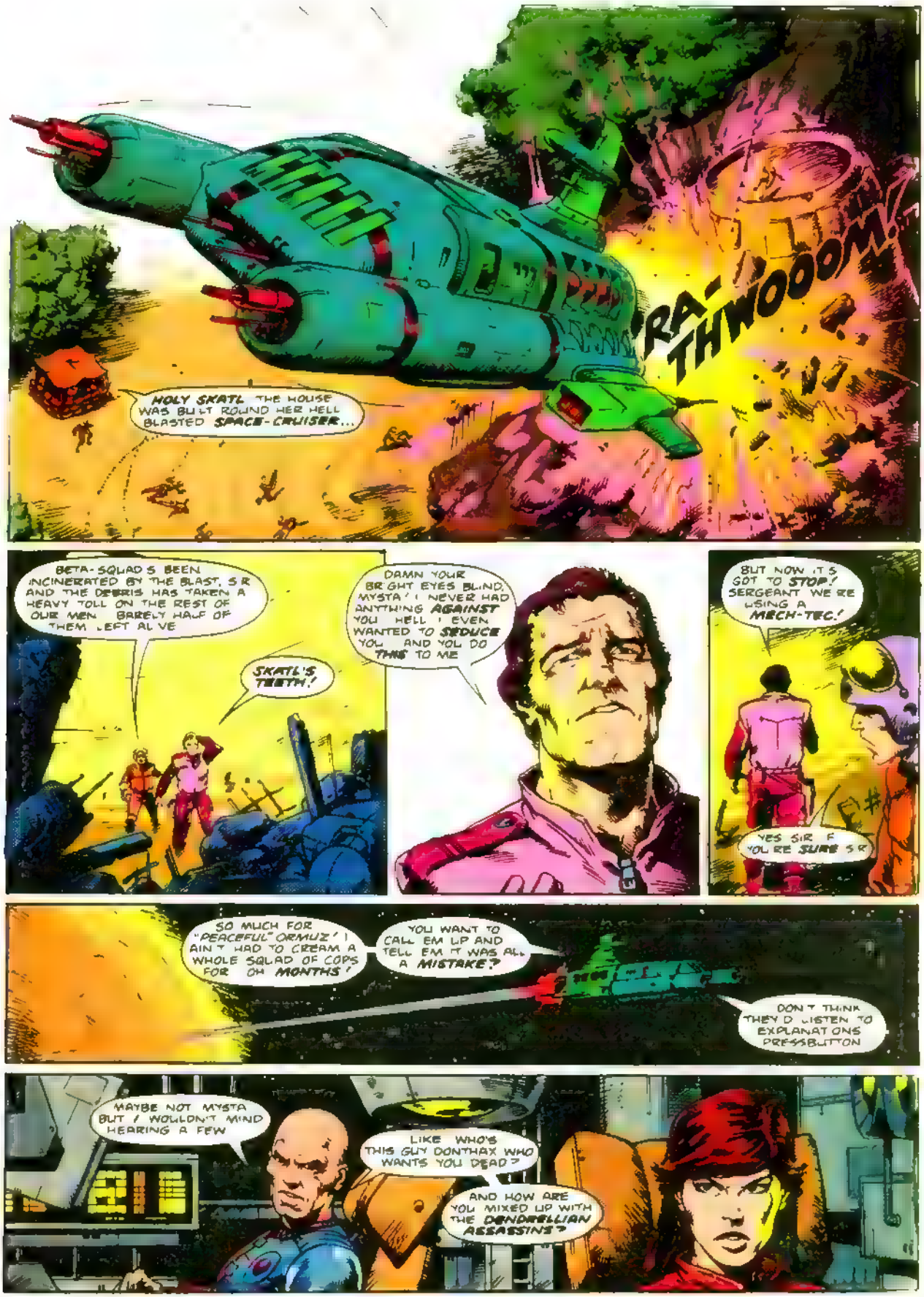

AND NOTHING'S JUST ABOUT ALL THAT'S LEFT OF OUR ANDROID BUDDY!
NOW WE KNOW WHO GAVE YOU THAT PHONEY ORDER TO KILL PELAGON
EVEN IF THERE'S NOT ENOUGH OF HIM LEFT TO PROVE IT
WHICH STILL LEAVES US IN A HELL OF A LOT OF TROUBLE
MAYBE MORE THAN YOU THINK
FIRST SOMEONE'S WATCHING OUR EVERY MOVE
SECOND AND WORSE, THAT WAS THE SAME TYPE OF PRACTISE-DROID AS USED BY THE D-O-AS
D-O-AS? DEAD-ONE ARRIVALS?
NO THE DENDRELLIAN ORDER OF ASSASSINS
BUT I THOUGHT THEY WERE ALL WIPED OUT THREE YEARS AGO
SO DID
HEY, MYSTA WHAT'VE YOU—
TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER
RIGHT NOW I THINK WE OUGHT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE HAPPENS!
LIKE THAT?
MM LIKE THAT
SO MUCH FOR THAXDON INDUSTRIES
THAXDON? THAX DON...
OF COURSE! IT'S A FRONT FOR

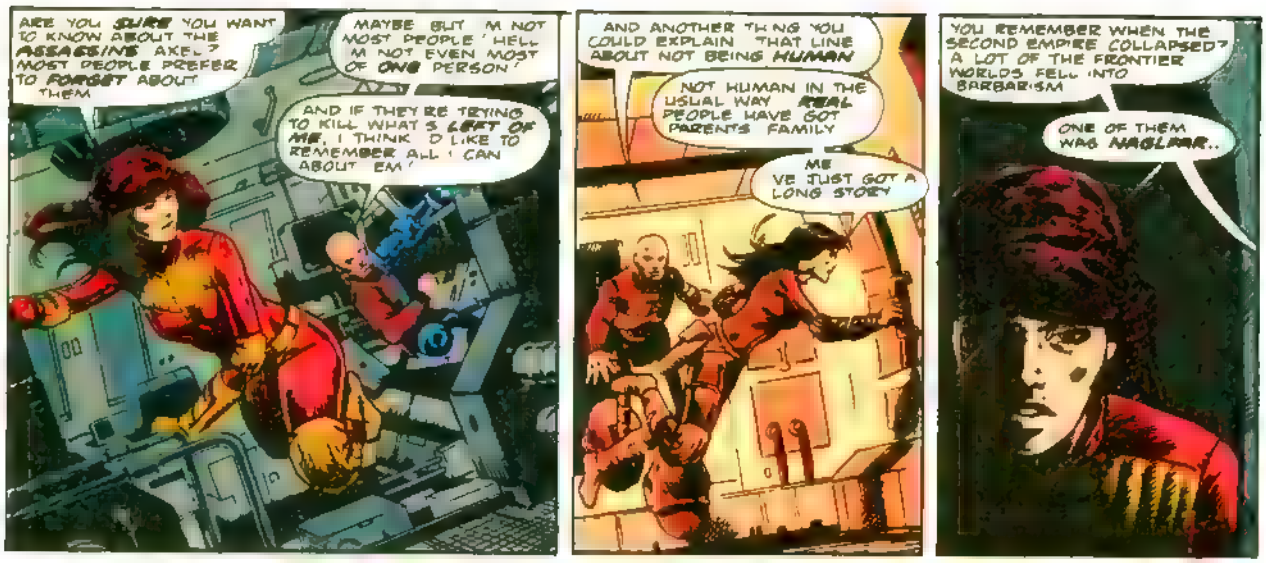
AFTER US DONTHAX"
SO THE GIRL SEEMS AS SKILFUL AS WHEN I LAST MET HER
AS FOR HER COMPANION WITH HIS STRANGE AVERSION TO PLANTS
WHAT OF IT? I'M AVERSE TO HIM..
SO METALLIC MECHANICAL STUFF! BUT THE GIRL...
THE GIRL IS SO SUPPLE..
CONTROL YOURSELF ZIRK!
DON'T KILL HER YET DONTHAX LET ME HAVE HER
PERHAPS ZIRK TRUE I WANT HER TO SUFFER..
BUT THE MAIN THING IS, I WANT HER DEAD
AND I I WANT TO ELECTROCUTE HER
AND WATCH HER WRIGGLE!
ENOUGH, ZIRK, YOU VILE LITTLE PIECE OF SICKNESS!
AND LEAVE LEMANYA ALONE, OR I'LL HAVE YOU BLED AGAIN!
NOW AS MISS MYSTRALIS SEEMS TO BE ELUDING OUR TRAPS
THINK WE SHOULD TELL ORMUZIAN SECURITY WHERE SHE IS.

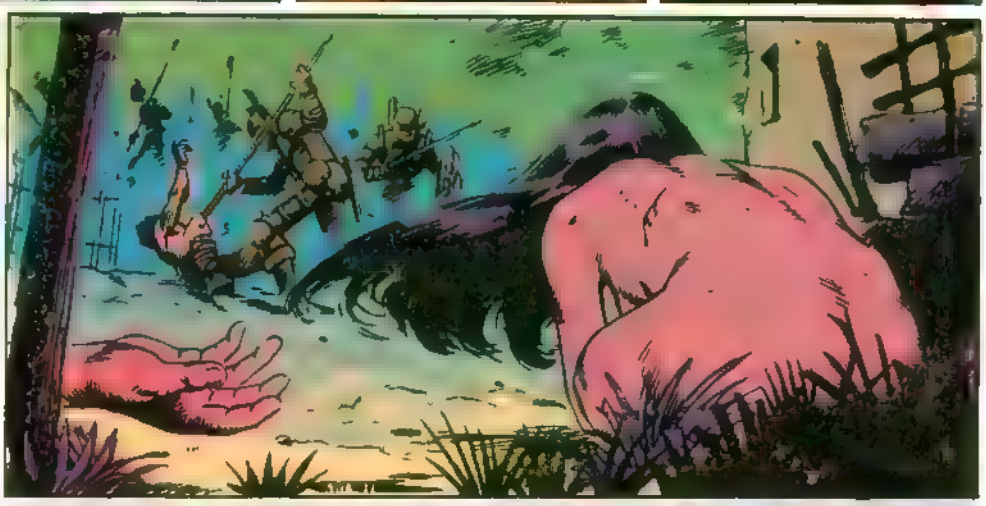
NEARLY HOME WHEN WE GET THERE, YOU CAN TELL ME —
WHATEVER YOU LIKE BUT LET'S GET THERE FIRST
YEAH BUT WHAT COULD
OH HELL
SNIPER!
SWAT!
WHERE IS THE B—?
FORGET IT HONEY
AXEL!
OWWF!
ALREADY TOOK 'IM OUT

ONLY TROUBLE IS IT LOOKS LIKE BAROMET GOT WORD TO A FEW FRIENDS
AND THEY'RE ALL WAITING TO TAKE US OUT!
HOPE THEIR INSURANCE IS ALL PAID UP
'CAUSE THIS IS WHERE THEY COLLECT!
THEY'RE TRYING TO CUT THEIR WAY THROUGH! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
BELIEVE IT SERGEANT
BELIEVE IT
OORGH!
BITCH!
AARGH!

WHO YOU CALLING A BITCH, SOLDIER?
YAAUGH!
AXEL, BEHIND YOU..
BEHIND ME? WHAT?
OH NOTHING
YERRCH!
YER RIGHT THESE GUYS ARE NOTHING AT ALL
IN FACT MOST OF EM AVE VANISHED...
SO IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN THE CLEAR...
DOOR!
ZIK!
THIS IS CRAZY! CAN CALL UP A BATTERY TO FLATTEN THAT PLACE IN TWO MINUTES
THEY'VE LET THEMSELVES BE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED THERE'S NOWHERE THEY CAN GO NOW
EXCEPT UP!
CAPTAIN THE BUILDING'S SHAKING...
SHAKING? IT'S CRUMBLING! FALLING APART!

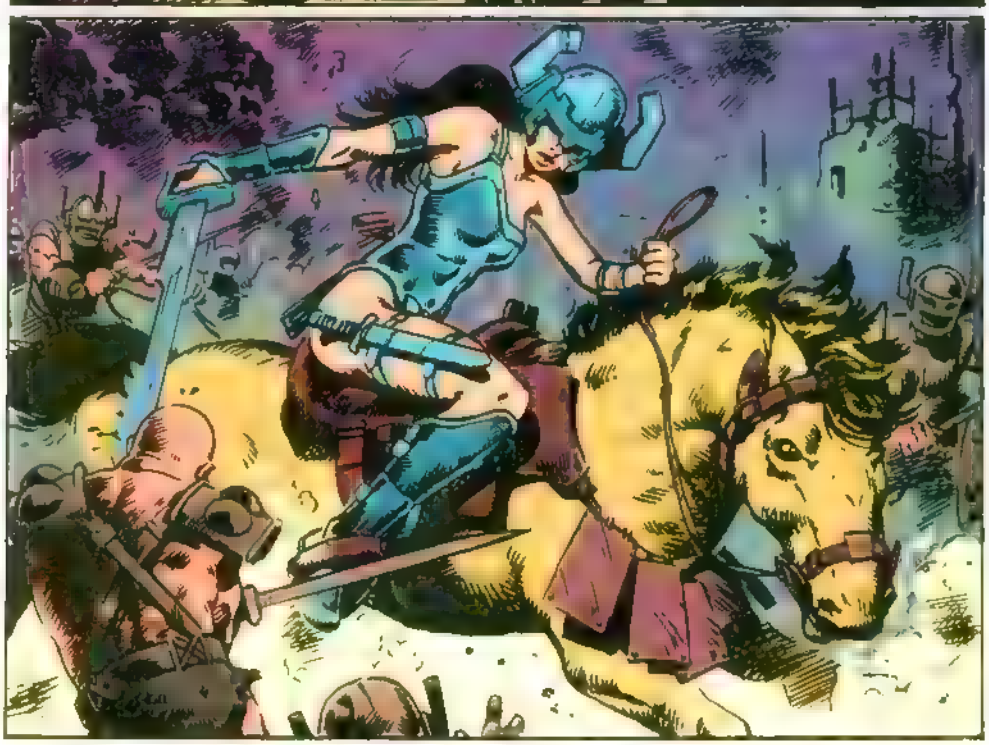

HOLY SKATL THE HOUSE WAS BUILT ROUND HER HELL BLASTED SPACE-CRUISER...
RA-THWOOOM!
BETA-SQUAD'S BEEN INCINERATED BY THE BLAST, SIR AND THE DEBRIS HAS TAKEN A HEAVY TOLL ON THE REST OF OUR MEN. BARELY HALF OF THEM LEFT ALIVE
SKATL'S TEETH!
DAMN YOUR BRIGHT EYES BLIND, MYSTA! I NEVER HAD ANYTHING AGAINST YOU. HELL! I EVEN WANTED TO SEDUCE YOU... AND YOU DO THIS TO ME
BUT NOW IT'S GOT TO STOP! SERGEANT WE'RE USING A MECH-TEC!
YES SIR. IF YOU'RE SURE SIR
SO MUCH FOR "PEACEFUL" ORMUZ! I AIN'T HAD TO CREAM A WHOLE SQUAD OF COPS FOR OH MONTHS!
YOU WANT TO CALL 'EM UP AND TELL 'EM IT WAS ALL A MISTAKE?
DON'T THINK THEY'D LISTEN TO EXPLANATIONS PRESSBUTTON
MAYBE NOT MYSTA BUT I WOULDN'T MIND HEARING A FEW
LIKE WHO'S THIS GUY DONTHAX WHO WANTS YOU DEAD?
AND HOW ARE YOU MIXED UP WITH THE DENDRELLIAN ASSASSINS?


ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE ASSASSINS AXEL? MOST PEOPLE PREFER TO FORGET ABOUT THEM
MAYBE BUT I'M NOT MOST PEOPLE ' HELL I'M NOT EVEN MOST OF ONE PERSON'
AND IF THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL WHAT'S LEFT OF ME, I THINK I'D LIKE TO REMEMBER ALL I CAN ABOUT 'EM'
AND ANOTHER THING YOU COULD EXPLAIN THAT LINE ABOUT NOT BEING HUMAN
NOT HUMAN IN THE USUAL WAY REAL PEOPLE HAVE GOT PARENTS FAMILY
ME I'VE JUST GOT A LONG STORY
YOU REMEMBER WHEN THE SECOND EMPIRE COLLAPSED? A LOT OF THE FRONTIER WORLDS FELL INTO BARBARISM
ONE OF THEM WAS NAGLFAR..



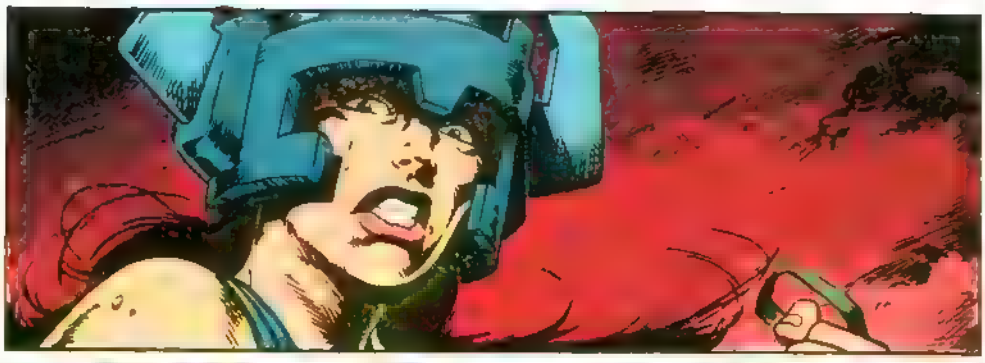
"THE POPULATION DID THEIR BEST TO DESTROY THEMSELVES IN AN ORGY OF MURDER AND TORTURE RAPE AND PLUNDER THAT WENT ON YEAR AFTER YEAR

"THEY STARTED WITH GUNS THEN THEY USED SWORDS AND FINALLY THEY CLAWED EACH OTHER WITH THEIR BARE HANDS



"BUT AT LAST THE DEADLIEST OF THEM GATHERED THEIR FOLLOWERS TOGETHER AND STARTED TO CARVE OUT THEIR OWN TERRITORIES

"AND ONE OF THEM WAS EKTRYN

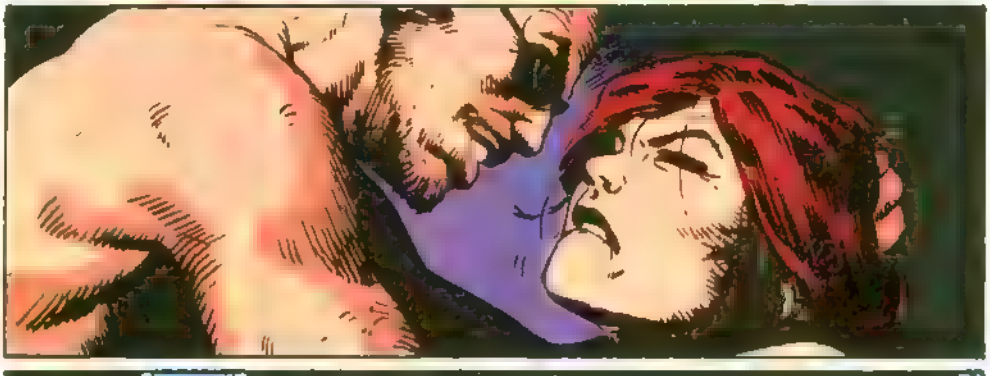


"EKTRYN OF THE SILVER ARMOUR... THE VIRGIN OF NAGLFAR

"EKTRYN
THE WAR WOMAN

"BUT EVEN SHE COULDN'T SURVIVE LONG IN THAT HOLOCAUST OF BLOOD AND BONE

"AND SHE WAS BETRAYED TO A WARLORD CALLED DONTIR



"A MAN OF CRUEL HUMOUR, DON'T R... WHEN HE FOUND HE COULDN'T BREACH THE CLASPS OF HER ARMOUR

"HE HAD EKTRYN ENCASED IN MOLTEN SILVER FROM HEAD TO FOOT..."

WHEN THINGS GOT BACK TO NORMAL LATER SHE ENDED UP IN A MUSEUM IN SIDHE ARMOURED INVOLATE
AND VERY VERY DEAD
BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH YOU?
SURE IT'S A SAD STORY BUT IT HAPPENED FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO
SAD? NO IT'S TOO LONG GONE TO BE SAD ANY MORE
TURN THE GRAVITY ON AXEL
BUT SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED AT SIDHE
THE BIGGEST RAID THE DENORELL AN ASSASSINS EVER MADE LED BY A YOUNG MAN CALLED ARTERIUS DONTHAX
WIPED OUT FOUR FIFTHS OF AN ENTIRE CITY AND THE ONLY THING THEY TOOK
WAS A LIFE-SIZED SILVER STATUE OF A FAMOUS WOMAN
EKTRYN?
RIGHT AND INSIDE THAT SILVER CASE
DONTHAX FOUND ENOUGH CELL TISSUE HAD BEEN PRESERVED IN SPITE OF THE YEARS
FOR HIM TO MAKE A CLONE..
ME

"I WAS BORN IN A CELLULAR REGENERATION MATRIX

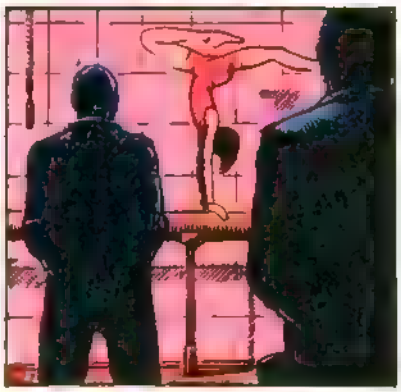
"SPENT THE FIRST COUPLE OF YEARS IN A GROWTH ACCELERATION TANK

"NO MOTHER, NO FATHER NO FRIENDS JUST DONTHAX AND THE ASSASSINS.

"I THOUGHT IT WAS NATURAL THAT **ALL** CHILDREN WERE BROUGHT UP LIKE THAT

"I ENJOYED THE GYMNASTIC SESSIONS AND THE LEARNING PERIODS BUT THERE'S ONE THING ALWAYS REMEMBER ABOUT THE MEN WHO TAUGHT ME

"THEY WERE VERY QUIET



"WHEN I WAS BIG ENOUGH THEY BEGAN MY TRAINING AND NOT KNOWING ANYTHING DIFFERENT, I LEARNED WITH ENTHUSIASM

"THE SYNTHI-DROIDS I PRACTISED ON WERE ASTONISHINGLY LIFE-LIKE THEY'D SCREAM WHEN YOU KILLED THEM

"AT LEAST **MOST** OF MY VICTIMS WERE DROIDS

"THAT TRAINING TOOK A **LONG** TIME

YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MANY WAYS THERE ARE TO KILL A MAN

"SOMETIMES YOU KNOW THINGS WITHOUT BEING TOLD AND I KNEW I WAS THE **BEST**

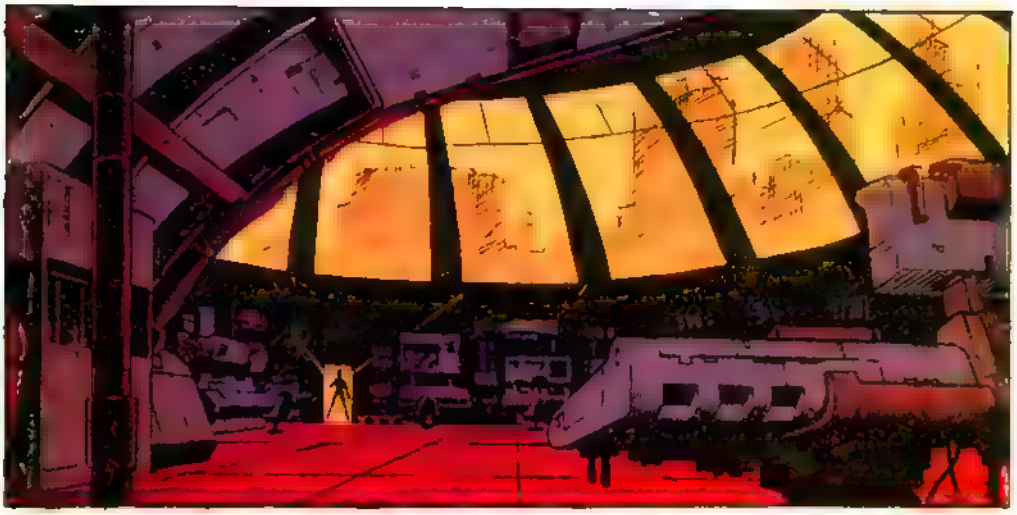
"EXCEPT MAYBE FOR **DONTHAX** HE WAS THE ONLY ONE ANYTHING LIKE MY EQUAL

AND I ADMIRED HIM FOR IT

"HELL NO. TOWARD THE END I **LOVED** HIM FOR IT

"ONE THING HE'D NEVER TELL ME THOUGH WAS WHERE I CAME FROM AND THERE WAS ONE SECTION OF THE DATA-BANK I NEVER HAD ACCESS TO THE HISTORICAL RECORDS

"BUT I WAS A TRAINED ASSASSIN AND AN ASSASSIN CAN FIND THOSE THINGS OUT



"SO I LEARNED ABOUT EKTRYN AND IT MADE SENSE CLONE A WOMAN LIKE THAT AND YOU'VE GOT A HEAD-START BEFORE YOU EVEN BEGIN THE TRAINING

"BUT THEN I FOUND SOMETHING I *DIDN'T* LIKE

"YOU SEE THE DEN-DRELLIAN ASSASSINS WERE FOUNDED [redacted] THE SON OF DONTIR OF NAGLFAR AND DONTHAX WAS HIS DIRECT DESCENDANT

AND WITH ME ARTERIUS DONTHAX HAD GOT EVERYTHING HIS ANCESTOR COULD NEVER GET FROM EKTRYN

AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID BUT IT MUST HAVE BEEN A *DROID* OF DONTHAX I GOT WITH THE *RIP-SAW GRENADE*
I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO LOOK AT THE SHREDS

IT'S A GOOD STORY MYSTA BUT YOU'RE FORGETTING ONE THING THE S DHE MASSACRE HAPPENED A LOT LESS THAN TWENTY YEARS AGO
AND YOU'RE FORGETTING THE ACCELERATED GROWTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY I'M JUST ABOUT TWENTY ONE
BUT IN REAL TIME .
I'M THIRTEEN YEARS OLD
AND N CASE YOU DON'T BELIEVE M A CLONE
SEE? NO NAVEL
WELL THAT'S OKAY HONEY HAVEN'T GOT ONE E THER
ANYWAY THE ASSASSINS WERE A RICH OUTFIT SO I GRABBED THIS SHIP ROAMED AROUND FOR A WHILE AND THEN SET MYSELF UP ON ORMUZ
AND THEN I HAD TO GET WORK RUBBING OUT V LLAINS FOR
MANETHO BAROMET
CAPTAIN JUST GOT WORD FROM CRYSTALLIZATION SIR THE MACH-TEC'S READY TO GO
GOOD! LET'S GET DOWN THERE AND GET IT PROGRAMMED.
YOU WANT THOSE TWO AWFULLY BAD DON'T YOU S R
I MEAN VE NEVER EVEN SEEN A MECH TEC BEFORE
M NOT SURPRISED THERE'S A MILL ON CREDITS WORTH OF PLASTI CRYSTAL N EACH UNIT

AH CAPTAIN WE'RE JUST DRAINING THE TANK AND THEN WE CAN START IMPRINTING
AND THERE'S A HOLND-SHIP FUELLED AND WAITING AT THE SPACEPORT
GOOD WE'VE TWO VICTIMS
MYSTA MYSTRALIS HERE'S HER FULL EMPLOYMENT FILE FINGERPRINTS RETINAL AND DERMAL ANALYSIS HOLOGRAPH, THE LOT
I'VE HAD TO IMPROVISE A DESCRIPTION OF THIS PRESSBUTTON GUY BUT HE'S NOT HARD TO RECOGNISE!
THIS WILL BRING THEM IN SERGEANT BELIEVE ME, IT'S COMPLETELY UNSTOPPABLE!
HMM RATHER THAT THAN ME THOUGH AS FAR AS THOSE TWO ARE CONCERNED
IS THIS MECH-TEC THING ARMED?
ARMED? OH YES SERGEANT
I THINK YOU COULD SAY IT WAS ARMED!
TO BE CONTINUED!

Sometimes a great notion

No Start again

Sometimes when you're lying around with the "Out to Lunch" notices pasted over your eyeballs, you get a really stupid idea and you don't know what the hell you can possibly do with it, so you write it down in your notebook and go back to sleep for a couple of years

It happened to me once I've got a very slim notebook

That was back about 1977, and I'm still using the same notebook, so it's easy to look things up That first note ran

"Character called 'Pressbutton'—he caught Vegan Green Rot years ago, and his body had to be rebuilt from the feet up to above his hips At the same time they built a button into his chest which, when pressed, gives direct electrical stimulation of the pleasure-centres of the brain

"Thus he chats up broads (in bars) 'Wanna press my button, honey?'

"Thus he is shot to death 'right on the button' and dies a happy man—his chest shattered and a hideous grin on his face

Well, if you'd been knocking around in the British comics industry in 1977, you would have known as well as I did that there was absolutely *no chance* of that seeing the light of day Those were the days when even *Judge Dredd* hadn't gotten off the ground properly Things have improved a bit (not much) since then, but at the time there were two cardinal rules you had to abide by, "Comics are for small children" and "We dare not do anything to upset the distributors" British comicsdistributors, incidently, are run by the sort of people who cover up their furniture because an exposed leg s an obscene object Even a chair leg

I could visualize it. I'd be sitting there in the office and the editor would suddenly look up from my script with an expression of horror

"But . ." he'd splutter, "but what's to stop him sitting around all day and *pressing his own button?*

"Cold showers and long runs in the country," I'd reply on my way out

No, it just wasn't on Pity about PB, but

Okay, let's backtrack a little Sometime around 1968 I met this bright-eyed, chubby-faced schoolkid called Alan Moore (yeah, *that* Alan Moore, the one who writes *Swamp Thing*) and for some reason I've stuck around to watch him go downhill ever since Come 1979, Alan was making a living from various British music-papers by pretending to be a cartoonist, and getting away with it most of the time too

But time was Alan's problem There wasn t enough of it So to help him out with his commitments to an (allegedly) bi-monthly rock magazine called *Dark Star*, I offered to write him a script Then I made a mistake I also offered to ink and letter it (What do I know about inking and lettering? Well . . . I'm a pretty good typist)

The result was four one-page installments (about 13 frames a page) of a thing called *Three-Eyes McGurk and his Death Planet-Commandos* And, of course, one of the Commandos was Pressbutton. It wasn't exactly the serious tragedy I'd originally intended, but if it took an underground-style funny strip to get him into print so be it The strip had nothing to do with music, naturally, which is probably why we never got paid for it, but a year later it was finished Three months a page Not bad, huh? I know they say genius is pain, but believe me, incompetence is *far* worse

So there was Pressbutton at last In print Mad And very severely killed in the last installment Shot right on the button

And that was that, I thought . . . except for good ol' Gilbert Shelton, who picked up the entire McGurk strip for reprinting in *Rip-Off Comics* no 8 (and *did* pay for it!)

But the ol bozo wouldn't lie down and rust in peace

Next thing I knew, Alan was on the phone (or rather, "Curt Vile," as he was calling himself in those days, for reasons we won't go into here) He'd got himself a half-page slot in a weekly music paper called *Sounds* and was intending to do a strip called *The Stars my Degradation* It was pretty full of drugs, violence jokes, sex and various bodily secretions it's not usually wise to mention when there are distributors in the room Could he use Pressbutton as one of the subsidiary characters?

It was one of the evenings when my brain was out to lunch again, and I had this vision of these robot legs walking around with a rotting corpse on top of them, but Alan patiently explained to me that the story would be set a few years before the *McGurk* strip So I said yes We held the copyright, and I didn't have anything lined up that I could use the character in Besides by that time Alan had grown up into a large muscular gorilla who could snap my spindly little body in half between the finger and thumb of his left hand And I have a very low pain threshold

So even before *McGurk* had finished . even before Pressbutton had been killed . there he was, resurrected and in print again Why anyone should take a liking to a half-robot cleaver-maniac with a passionate hatred of vegetables, I've no idea (I thought I was the only lunatic around), but apparently they did, and PB soon moved up from background character to centre stage

Stars ran a hundred half-page installments, plus two four-page Christmas specials, with Alan handling the script, art and lettering I returned to write the last thirty-odd installments (but not inking or lettering this

continued on next page

continued from page 23

time even I'm not that stupid . . .)

Back-tracking time again about the same time as I met Alan, I also ran into this character called Dez Skinn God knows why, but come late 1981 I was still in touch with him, and by then he'd run the entire gamut of publishing from A to B, he started off in comics, and he was still in comics And now he had a brand new idea Another comic

But *Warrior* turned out to be a bit different from the usual run of British stuff, a field of weekly rags printed on newsprint. It was monthly, a magazine with glossy covers . . . and, most shocking of all, it gave its creators copyright, reprint fees, and merchandising rights. It even gave you freedom to do what you like, and to hell with the distributors

And Dez was looking for a science fiction strip

By this time, Alan had developed Pressbutton's potential a lot and rounded out the character He'd given him a first name, anyway Axel

And Axel Pressbutton, Esq., decided he wanted to appear in *Warrior*. It wasn't anything to do with me I'd completely lost control of the bozo by this time, and he was doing what he liked

Fortunately (and rarely in the British industry), Alan and I had held onto the copyright of all Axel's previous appearances. So off I went to see Dez. He took a little persuading to start off with, but by the time a couple of minutes had passed we were on out way I'd like to think it was because no one in their right mind argues with a guy with a meat-cleaver, but probably what did the trick was when I told him that Pressbutton was already appearing in a quarter of a million copies of *Sounds* every week You know how it is with publishers

So things were on the move. Better yet, I was going to get the chance to do Pressbutton as a straight adventure strip, just the way I'd always intended from the start. And having enrolled one of Britain's best young artists, Steve Dillon, to draw him, we started tossing a few ideas around

There were one or two problems to sort out, of course For the underground strips, Alan had visualised Axel as a spindly-legged, fifty year old maniac, which just wasn't going to work for *Warrior*. So Steve redesigned the character with a much sleeker body and two bloody great enormous feet

So how were we going to explain these subtle differences in his pedal extremities? Easy Having killed him in his first appearance and then revived him for *Sounds* in stories set eight years before his death, we just pulled the same stunt again. The *Warrior* stories (and stuff you see here) are set fourteen years before the *Sounds* material. This is PB's first robotic body, when he gets older and doesn't want to carry all that extra weight around, he changes it for the spindly underground version

If you're starting to get baffled by all this backwards-continuity . . . it gets worse. After a few issues of the regular *Warrior* strip, we began an occasional series of Pressbutton solo stories, with a variety of artists, set even earlier, just after he got the robot body How much further back can we go? Well, I suppose there's always "The adventures of Pressbutton when he was a small boy" . .and "Tales of Pressbutton's Mom and Dad" . . and

But back to the plot

Another thing we wanted to do in *Warrior* was give Axel a companion By that time I had another "Out to Lunch" idea written in my notebook, for a character called "Laser-Eraser" All I had was that, obviously, he shot people for money, and that he used aliens' brains for chewing gum. "Laser-Eraser and Pressbutton' sounded like a pretty good title to me, and when I started to get violent about it, I suddenly found that everyone agreed with me Laser-Eraser and Pressbutton it was

The biggest change, naturally, came when I decided to get rid of the alien chewing gum Apart from that, though, I also decided to change the character's sex Laser-Eraser suddenly got herself a real name, Mysta Mystralis, a slim little body, long brown hair and something of a fetish about shiny metallic objects Like Pressbutton

All this was going on while I was still writing the scripts for *Sounds*, and writing the same character in two completely different styles, for two utterly different artists, was driving me nuts Or maybe more nuts But it's weird . . he took a long time to get off the ground, but once he got started, Pressbutton's been in continuous production. For five years now

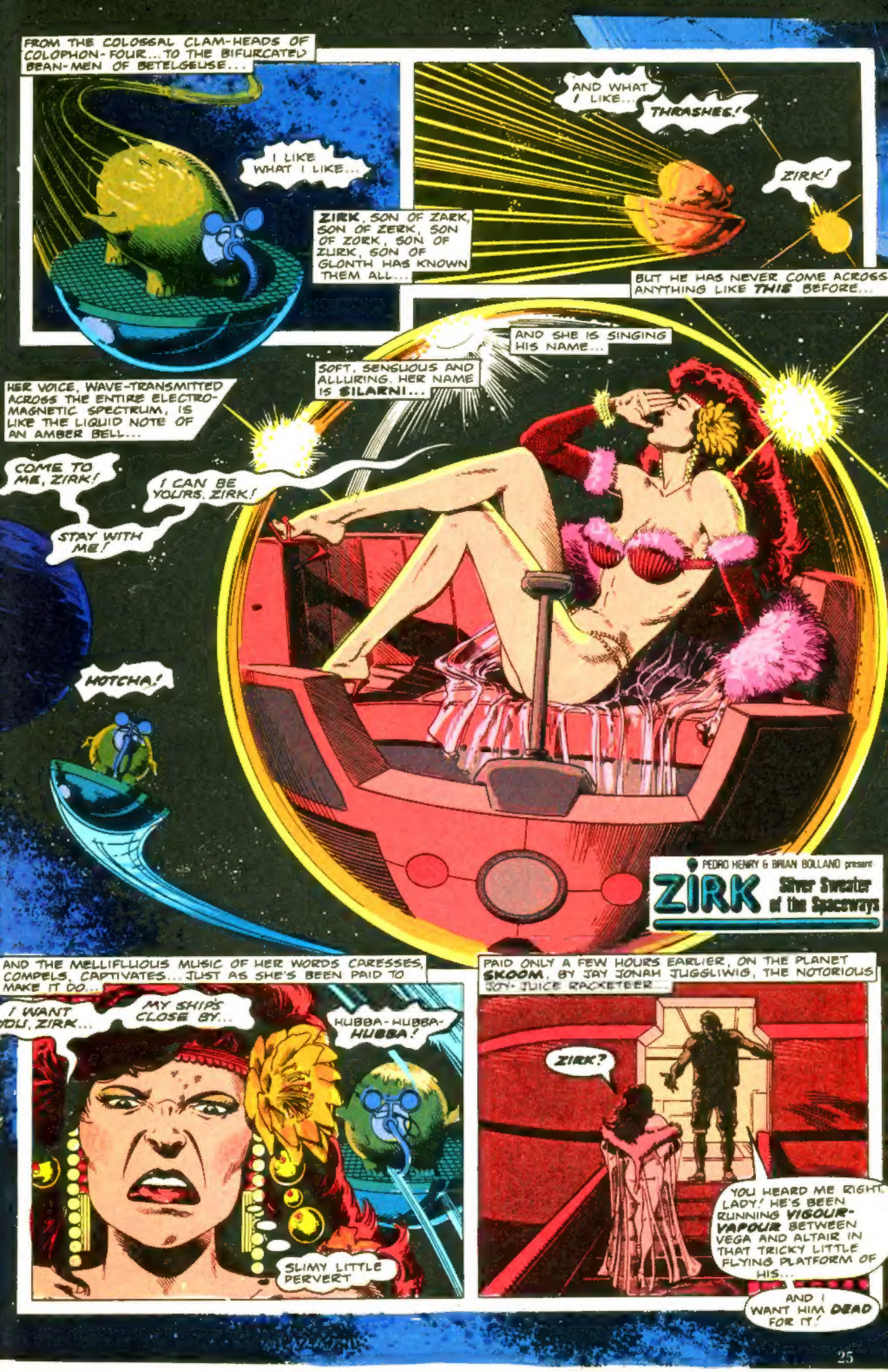
It was all getting a bit beyond me now Not only was Axel running in *Warrior*, but he'd managed to grab the front cover of the first issue as well Background characters, like the sweaty little alien geek, Zirk, and a former incarnation of Mysta, Ektryn the War Woman, were getting their own solo strips. Pressbutton had his own solo strips I was starting to need a new notebook Where was there left to go?

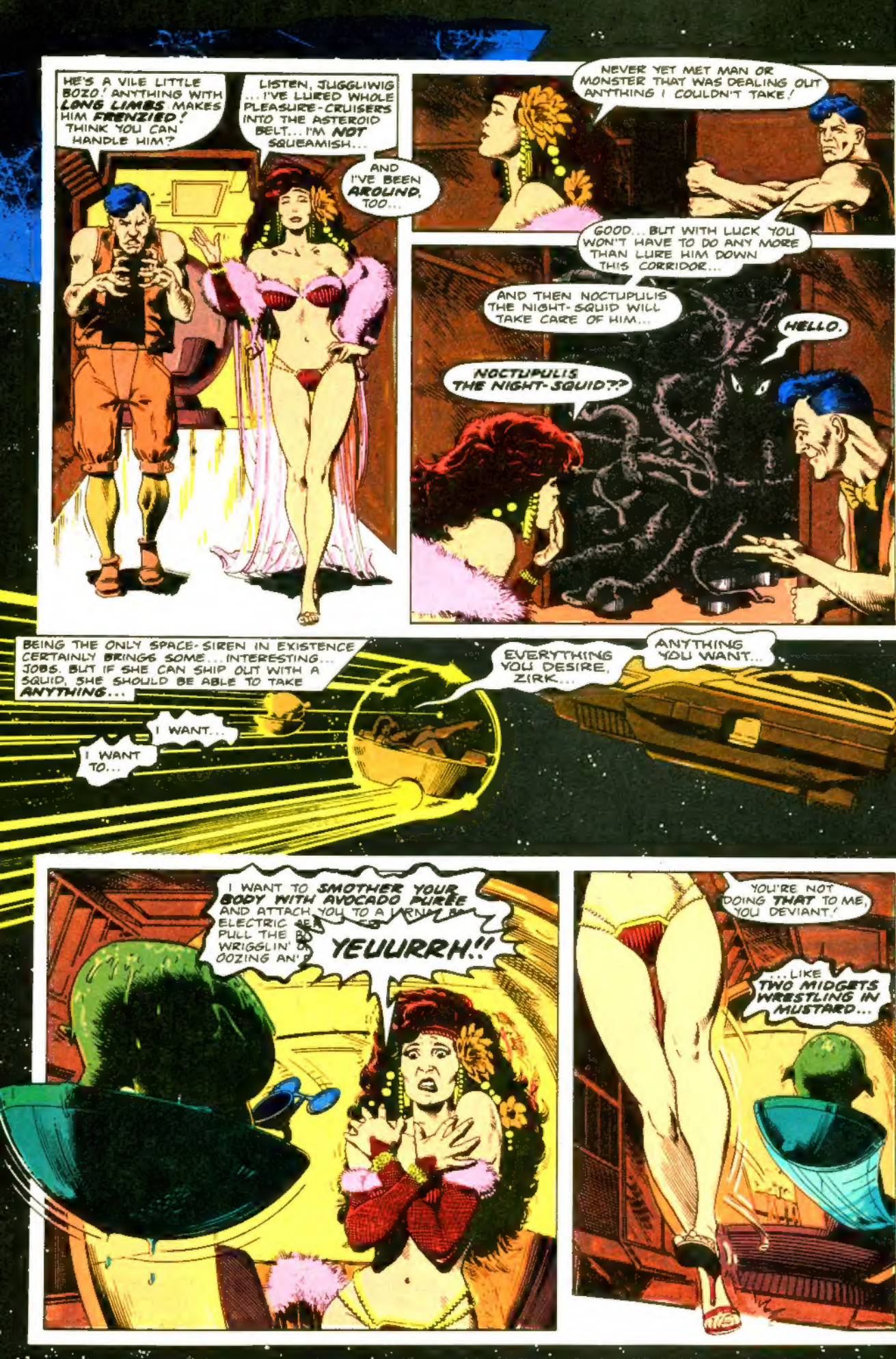
Well, Pressbutton, decided he wanted to appear in an American colour comic And here we are

What next? Well, I've a feeling the old rustbucket might want to appear in a cheap trashy space-opera novel before long, if he can find a publisher to threaten And the movie rights are still available

But it's nothing to do with me I'm just going to lay back and stare at the ceiling for a bit

Pedro Henry
Out to Lunch, 1984


FROM THE COLOSSAL CLAM-HEADS OF COLOPHON-FOUR... TO THE BIFURCATED BEAN-MEN OF BETELGEUSE...
I LIKE WHAT I LIKE...
ZIRK, SON OF ZARK, SON OF ZERK, SON OF ZORK, SON OF ZURK, SON OF GLONTH HAS KNOWN THEM ALL...
AND WHAT I LIKE... THRASHEE!
ZIRK!
BUT HE HAS NEVER COME ACROSS ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE...
AND SHE IS SINGING HIS NAME...
SOFT, SENSUOUS AND ALLURING. HER NAME IS SILARNI...
HER VOICE, WAVE-TRANSMITTED ACROSS THE ENTIRE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC SPECTRUM, IS LIKE THE LIQUID NOTE OF AN AMBER BELL...
COME TO ME, ZIRK!
I CAN BE YOURS, ZIRK!
STAY WITH ME!
HOTCHA!
PEDRO HENRY & BRIAN BOLLAND present
ZIRK Silver Sweater of the Spaceways
AND THE MELLIFLUOUS MUSIC OF HER WORDS CARESSES, COMPELS, CAPTIVATES... JUST AS SHE'S BEEN PAID TO MAKE IT DO...
I WANT ...OU, ZIRK...
MY SHIP'S CLOSE BY...
HUBBA-HUBBA-HUBBA!
SLIMY LITTLE PERVERT
PAID ONLY A FEW HOURS EARLIER, ON THE PLANET SKOOM, BY JAY JONAH JUGGLIWIG, THE NOTORIOUS JOY-JUICE RACKETEER...
ZIRK?
YOU HEARD ME RIGHT, LADY! HE'S BEEN RUNNING VIGOUR-VAPOUR BETWEEN VEGA AND ALTAIR IN THAT TRICKY LITTLE FLYING PLATFORM OF HIS...
AND I WANT HIM DEAD FOR IT!


HE'S A VILE LITTLE BOZO! ANYTHING WITH LONG LIMBS MAKES HIM FRENZIED! THINK YOU CAN HANDLE HIM?
LISTEN, JUGGLIWIG ... I'VE LURED WHOLE PLEASURE-CRUISERS INTO THE ASTEROID BELT... I'M NOT SQUEAMISH...
AND I'VE BEEN AROUND, TOO...
NEVER YET MET MAN OR MONSTER THAT WAS DEALING OUT ANYTHING I COULDN'T TAKE!
GOOD... BUT WITH LUCK YOU WON'T HAVE TO DO ANY MORE THAN LURE HIM DOWN THIS CORRIDOR...
AND THEN NOCTUPULIS THE NIGHT-SQUID WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM...
HELLO.
NOCTUPULIS THE NIGHT-SQUID?!?
BEING THE ONLY SPACE-SIREN IN EXISTENCE CERTAINLY BRINGS SOME... INTERESTING... JOBS. BUT IF SHE CAN SHIP OUT WITH A SQUID, SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE ANYTHING...
I WANT...
I WANT TO...
EVERYTHING YOU DESIRE, ZIRK...
ANYTHING YOU WANT...
I WANT TO SMOTHER YOUR BODY WITH AVOCADO PUREE AND ATTACH YOU TO A VENUS ELECTRIC BEAN! PULL THE BIG WRIGGLIN' OOZING AN'
YEUURRH!!
YOU'RE NOT DOING THAT TO ME, YOU DEVIANT!
...LIKE TWO MIDGETS WRESTLING IN MUSTARD...

OR...UH, HUH... WITH THE SEVERED NECK OF A DEAD OSTRICH—
YOW!!
TENTACLES!
LONG WRIGGLY TENTACLES!
WOO-WOO!!
IT'S GOT HIM! I'M SAVED!
MAYBE. BUT LOOK OUT!
SKRUNCH!
OH MY GRIEF! LISTEN TO WHAT NOCTUPULIS IS DOING TO HIM IN THERE!
BLAST! IT'S WEDGED ITSELF IN BETWEEN THE FRAMISTAT AND THE TERWILLIGER!
SQUEE!
GRAUNCH!
LASH!
CAN'T SHIFT IT OR IT'LL BLOW THE WHOLE CONSOLE! HAVE TO GET PLANET-SIDE AND CUT IT OUT THERE...!
HEY, LISTEN... IT'S GETTING QUIET...
THRASH!
THRASH
THRASH!
GASP! DARLING! COME BACK!
TAXI!
TAXI!!
YOORGH!
BAMF!

COME BACK, ZIRK! I...! LOVE YOU!
LOVE 'EM AND LEAVE 'EM...
JUGGLIWIG'S DEAD... ZIRK'S GONE... AND THE SHIP COULD EXPLODE AT ANY MOMENT!
I'VE GOT TO GET TO THAT ESCAPE CAPSULE... FAST!
AND...
GOMPH!
MADE IT! AND ONLY JUST IN TIME!
NOW, LET'S CHECK THE EMERGENCY RATIONS...
THAT'S ODD! ALL THE RATIONS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY SQUEEZE-TUBES OF...
AVOCADO PURÉE?
AHEM...!
SKWIJ!
EEEE-EEEEKK!!
end